Every path we couldn’t take

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Every path we couldn’t take

by BumblebeesAndDandelions

Summary

The new researcher was hiding something. He’s like Will, made of something other than everyone else, something other than human. At least he’d arrived in chains, this man strode in an actual three piece suit, leading a host of other researchers like they wouldn’t delight in throwing him in a cage.

They won’t get the chance to.

Notes

June 30 - | Buried Alive | Failed Escape |

I did it!! This is my final entry for June of Doom

There was a buzz among the D-class personal at the site. The researchers had found a new SCP, apparently, and were in the process of registering it and classifying it. Which meant that a lot of them, the D-class, would likely be dying soon, in order for the researchers to better test the SCP.

Will was D-class. It meant that in his past, he'd done something bad enough that no one cares if he disappeared forever, or at least, in his case, had been accused of doing something that bad. It meant that, in the site he worked at, he could be killed in whatever way the doctors and researchers felt like, by any number of SCPs. He was lucky enough to be a janitor, and as long as he stayed under the radar, he wasn't called for testing of SCPs. His last three roommates had died that way, and he was not eager to follow them.

It was largely monotonous, cleaning up the common areas of the researchers and the D-class, kept separate to keep the researchers from potentially growing attached to them, because god forbid they have empathy to those they sentence to gruesome deaths. Cleaning up the containment areas of the SCPs, which usually meant collecting the remains of another D-class, although several SCPs produced waste.

They weren't supposed to talk to each other, D-class personal, but they did anyway. The only punishment they had in there was being killed, 'terminated', and that would happen to all of them anyway, sooner rather then later. Will avoided the others, though. His empathy made it easy to connect to them, which just made it worse when he had to scrape their bodies back together after they'd been torn apart, or blown up, or dissolved, or anything else. It was exhausting. The last friend he'd made had been Matthew Brown, his last roommate, and only because he'd been so determined, called them partners, said lone hawks should stick together, spun stories of how they'd get out of here one day.

He died two months ago, because the researchers wanted to know if the effects of one of the SCPs was transferrable through skin. It was one the researchers would never actually get close to, one that had been in containment for decades. It wasn't a needed test, but they were consumed by their thirst for knowledge. It would kill them all one day, even if Will wouldn't be around to see it.

The new SCP meant new tests, new researchers and doctors brought on, new horrifying ways the people around Will would be killed.

The researchers were talking about it, as he cleaned their common area. The protocols they claimed to care so much about were often shirked at the first opportunity, and they saw no reason not to talk about classified information while Will cleaned.

"Dr. Phillips says the thing nearly took out the whole retrieval team. No fucking way I'm being put on that, I didn't get this far by researching Keter class SCPs."

"Fuck off, you know none of us will in charge of it. They're bringing in some higher clearance researchers from other sites today, they don't trust us with it. I heard we're only keeping it until another site can be modified to contain it."

Will paused in his mopping at that, but only for a moment. It was dangerous to let them know he was listening, it would make him a target. New researchers were normal, they got switched around relatively often, but higher clearance meant that whatever was coming would be more dangerous than even the D-class personnel had been expecting. He hoped, for all their sakes, that the researchers were mistaken, or at the very least, that whatever it was would kill them quickly.

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There was something off with one of the new researchers. Will watched them, like he always did. It was safer if he knew the researchers well enough to stay under their radar, made it less likely that he would be chosen for tests. But this one was different. Just as callous as the others, dressed in the uniform, talked like them all, except maybe with more metaphors. But if Will didn't know better, hadn't experienced first hand the rigorous testing any employee, even D-class, went through to ensure they were human, he'd guess that the new doctor was an SCP.

He made sure to stay far away from the odd doctor over the next week, but his avoidance didn't last. The man called him into office, and Will went, despite his misgivings. There was nothing else he could do, as a D-class. It was better to follow orders and hope you'd come out alive then disobey and be terminated.

The doctor was turned away from Will when he entered, writing down notes in a journal. The nameplate on the man's desk read 'Dr. Hannibal Lecter, level 4, SCP Foundation.'

He knocked on the door frame, causing the man to look up from his journal. The man, Dr Lecter, smiled cordially at him, gesturing to the seat in front of his desk, which Will ignored.

"Yes, hello. My apologies, the newest SCP has had all of us scrambling to record observations. That's not why I called you in, though. I called you in to discuss yourself, actually."

Dr Lecter set his journal aside, flashing Will another smile. Will felt his hackles rise. He wasn't supposed to be noticed by anyone, he was supposed to stay under the radar. Attention in this place wasn't good, it was a death sentence, and attention from this man, who was, now that Will was in front of him and could really look, clearly something other than human.

"A man of your skills would make an excellent researcher. It would be a shame if you ended up used in an experiment, or trapped in a cage yourself, given your remarkable empathy."

Will sneered, defensive. He wouldn't be cowed by this man and his barely veiled threats, just because he had more power. The job offer was ignored, because no one moved out of D-class, ever. It was a lie. They were both monsters, in the eyes of everyone else, this man couldn't offer him anything.

"If one of us is being put in a cage, I think it'd be you. Are you memetic or just charismatic and stupidly confident they won't catch you?"

Dr Lecter froze, going completely still as he stared at Will. So he didn't know Will knew about him, interesting. Maybe he could use that, leverage for something.

He recovered within a blink, clearly ready to alter his little speech based on the fact that Will knew what he was.

Whatever he intended to say next was cut off by blaring sirens. There was a containment breach.

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The alarms were all flashing red, and the sound was drowning. It was nearly too loud to hear each other, even if they yelled, but they didn't need to. Protocol said Hannibal should move towards the exit, evacuate as quickly as possible, while Will was supposed to look for whatever causing the breach and be a human shield to try and stop it. Whatever powers Hannibal had might even help him do that, if he moved quickly enough. Neither of them did that, though. Instead, they moved in sync, not to leave, but to protect where they were. Hannibal moved quickly, locking the door to his office while Will started pushing the desk to block the door. It was heavy, but if something big enough and determined enough tried to get in, they'd be screwed.

Less than a minute after they'd barricaded the door, all of the lights shut off, replaced with the red of the emergency back ups. Shortly after, the alarm cut off with a final screech. Whoever was supposed to be stopping the breach was clearly failing.

Will was sitting on the ground, leaning back against the wall, while Hannibal ruffled through the contents of his desk, then the file cabinets, scanning each file before discarding it without care.

"What the hell could you possibly be looking for? You do realize, doctor, that we're both dead? Even if, in some miracle, whatever is out there doesn't get in here and kill us, protocol says site wide breaches means site wide terminations. Ergo, us, terminated. No file will change that."

The door thumped, as if to prove Will's point. In the silence left by the alarms, they could hear the screams of their coworkers as they died to whatever was out there. Someone was pleading outside the door, begging to be let in, before they screamed again, and were abruptly cut off by the sound of ripping flesh.

They both watched the door for a moment, waiting for the thing to break in, but it seemed to be following the screams of the others, and left their door alone.

"I was looking for the file on the new SCP, so that I could learn more about it before it 'got in here and killed us', but whatever that was, wasn't the SCP being brought in." Hannibal stopped flipping through the files, seeming to, at least slightly, grasp the gravity of the situation they were in.

"Then multiple SCPs are on the loose, and the lamest two are stuck in this office, flipping through files." Will let his head fall back against the wall again. As places to die went, this

wasn't so bad. Better than his cell has been, before the foundation had 'recruited' him. Better company, he supposed, then he'd expected to have, even if Hannibal was far too prickly about politeness.

Hannibal started towards Will, but was knocked off balance when the room began to shake. Will stumbled to his feet, bracing against the wall as dust rained down lightly from the ceiling. It felt like being stuck in a box being shaken by a child. Will tried to reach Hannibal, and got thrown into the filing cabinets, bruising his entire left side. Finally, after what felt like hours, the shaking stopped.

An automated voice came on over the intercom system.

"Researchers and residents of Site-142, there has been a site wide breach. In accordance with containment protocol 1932-TR3, the site has been cut off from the outside world, and buried. You have given your lives for this Foundation, and will be remembered. Thank you for your service."

They both took a moment to process that, before Will started laughing. He tried to stifle it, pressing a hand to his mouth, before giving up and laughing uncontrollably.

"I was wrong! They won't even bother killing us themselves, they'll just fucking bury us and leave us to die. Fuck. I hope fucking Lounds got eaten by that thing out there."

They were covered in dust from the ceiling, Will's side was aching, and Hannibal was bleeding sluggishly from somewhere on his forehead, and they were going to die in this room, forgotten. He wasn't sure why this was worse than before, he'd already been expecting to die. Maybe the announcement just pushed him straight through any denial he had into inevitability. They weren't being rescued, they couldn't escape. Even the SCPs running around out there couldn't escape. They were out of their cages, but just as trapped as them.

They sat next to each other on the floor, leaning against the wall. The screams had mostly died down outside, apart from the occasional shrill screech, but there were other sounds now, of the SCPs moving throughout the building. Slithering and clanking, heavy thudding footsteps and childlike laughter.

They stayed that way for hours, listening as the SCPs explored and fought, tore at the remains of their colleagues. At one point, a terrified voice came on the intercom, begging for help, before being cut off by that same childish laughter. They were lucky it was a push button system, instead of anything else. Will didn't want to have to listen to that girl get torn apart.

Eventually, maybe out of boredom, maybe out of some need to pretend he wasn't about to die, Will started talking again.

"You never told me, what is your whole thing, powers wise? You know about my empathy, obviously, but I'm curious about who I'm going to die with."

"It isn't a power that would gain us our freedom, I'm afraid. You were right, earlier, in that it is partly memetic. I can make people believe they know me, respect me. Except for you, which I believe is due to your empathy. The other part is physical, a transformation into

something more… other. If we hadn't been cut off from the world, I could have fought our way out in order to escape, but…"

Hannibal shrugged at the lost opportunity.

"I find myself remiss. You know my name, and yet I don't know yours."

Will smiled, couldn't help it. The first time he'd been asked his name in months, maybe years, and it was here, now. Names had importance in so many cultures, denoted adulthood or relations to others, had power over people. One of the first things any child learned was their name, every folk hero was immortalized by their name first and their deeds second. Names were humanity, and what time to regain his own, at the end of the world.

"It's Will. Will Graham, originally from Louisiana. What about you?"

"Lithuania, originally. Who were you, before you came here?"

"I was a profiler for the FBI. Used my empathy to find killers. Then I got sick, got in too deep into too many killers heads, and I got arrested. I'm honestly still not sure whether I actually killed any of those people."

It felt good, admitting that. He'd been harboring that secret for years, his uncertainty. What if they'd been wrong? What if he'd just been sick, and everyone around him had blamed him for no reason? Then he'd be down here for nothing, he'd be down here not because he'd killed people but because those closest to him had been willing to believe he was a murderer.

Hannibal accepted the information with a nod, like it was easy. Maybe it was for him. His innocence, whether or not it was real, wouldn't change anything anyway. They were still going to die.

"I was a psychiatrist before I joined the foundation. A surgeon before that. I moved to America to escape my past, and I largely succeeded."

He paused for a moment, weighing his words. As he did, Will noticed a new form of silence- the vents weren't hissing fresh air into the space as they always did. At least starvation or dehydration wouldn't kill them, he supposed. At least suffocation was gentler than the teeth and claws of the things outside.

Hannibal seemed to have noticed it too, and he grimaced lightly at the knowledge.

"I am glad, Will, to have known you, for even this short amount of time. Were fate kinder, I would have liked to see you flourish in the wild world, away from this place."

"I don't know Doctor Lecter, I don't find you that interesting. Might have just ignored you, given the chance," He teased, ignoring the sting of regret he felt at those worlds. God, he wished they could be there, outside. He missed the trees, the sky. He missed his dogs, even after so long apart from them. He missed the person he might have been.

"I can be persuasive, my dear Will. I am confident you would have come around."

“Maybe. In some other world.”

“In some other world, indeed.”

They sat, shoulder to shoulder, content with each other's company for the time they would have it.

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